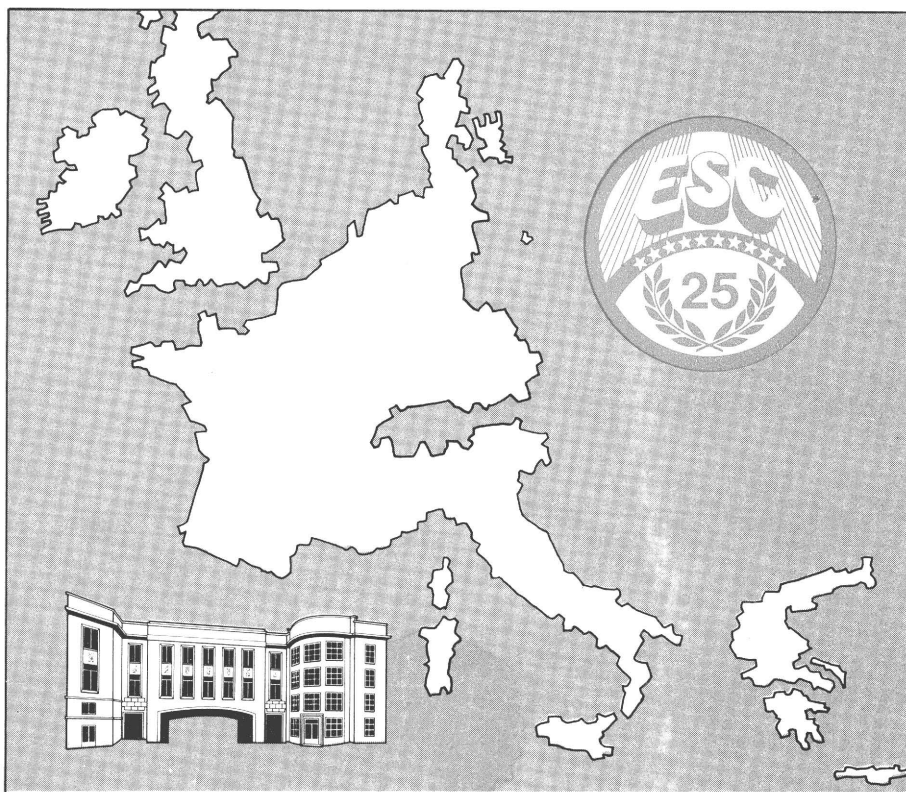


TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

THE ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE
OF THE
EUROPEAN
COMMUNITIES





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TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

THE ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION OF
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INTEREST
GROUPS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE
COMMUNITY

PALAIS DES CONGRÈS
31 MAY 1983
ALBERT I ROOM - BRUSSELS

✓

EXHIBITION
1983

25 YEARS ESC

ESC headquarters



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Committee

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HRH Prince ALBERT is welcomed by ESC Chairman, Mr François CEYRAC



On 31 May 1983, the European Communities' Economic and Social Committee celebrated its 25th anniversary with a formal sitting in the Palais des Congrès in Brussels. There were some six hundred guests.

The main them of the formal sitting was **THE ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INTEREST GROUPS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNITY.**

The sitting was attended by HRH Prince Albert of Liège. Other guests included Committee members and representatives of all the European Community institutions, the Ambassadors of the ACP countries and other countries accredited to the Community, the permanent representatives of the Member States, the Presidents of Member States' economic and social councils, representatives of the Belgian authorities, and other personalities involved in the Committee's activities.

The formal sitting was opened by the Chairman of the Economic and Social Committee, Mr François CEYRAC.

Speeches were then made by the following:

- Mr Piet DANKERT, President of the European Parliament;
- Mr Rudolf SPRUNG, President-in-Office of the Council;
- Mr Ivor RICHARD, Member of the Commission;
- Mr MERTENS de WILMARS, President of the Court of Justice;
- Mr Manlio GERMOZZI, senior member of the Economic and Social Committee.

The texts of their speeches follow below.

The proceedings were rounded off by a reception in Brussels Town Hall given by the Brussels City Council.

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From left to right:
Mr R. LOUET, ESC Secretary-
General, Mr A. PFEIFFER, ESC
Vice-Chairman, Mr I. RICHARD,
Member of the Commission,

Mr P. DANKERT, President of the
European Parliament,
Mr F. CEYRAC, ESC Chairman,
Mr R. SPRUNG, President of the
Council, Mr J. MERTENS de

WILMARS, President of the Court
of Justice, and Mr M. GERMOZZI,
senior ESC member.





***Speech by Mr François CEYRAC,
Chairman of the Economic and
Social Committee***

Your Royal Highness, it is a great honour — and, indeed, a great pleasure — to have you here among us today.

We know how much you share the concerns of all of us from the economic and social interest groups. We know too that you have a global vision of economic and political issues. Your presence here is a proof of your interest in our Committee and makes us well aware of our place in the European Economic Community.

Mr DANKERT, the role which the European Parliament, of which you are President, plays in the building of a truly democratic Europe needs no further mention. It is in all our interests that the next European elections make it abundantly clear that the citizens of Europe attach great importance to the progress of the Community. We, for our part, are resolved to do all that we can to make this so.

Dr SPRUNG, I should like to tell you, as President of the Council, that the relations which our Committee has with your institution are for us a matter of capital importance. Upon these relations depend our effectiveness and the influence that we, as representatives of socio-professional groups, feel is legitimately ours to exert on the Community authorities.

Commissioner RICHARD, your institution represents in our eyes an irreplaceable source of initiative and imagination, a fount of knowledge and a body with the ability to distinguish between what is possible and what is not. For these reasons, we attach a very great deal of importance to the close collaboration and trust that we have established with you.

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Mr MERTENS de WILMARS, I should like to say to you, as President of the Court of Justice, that the Court now plays a decisive role in ensuring when necessary — I was going to say imposing — a truly European interpretation of the cases submitted to it. In the space of a few years, the Court has acquired in the service of Europe an authority which, although sometimes feared, is never disputed.

Finally, it is my pleasure to welcome the representative of the Belgian Government, and our old colleague and friend, Mr Paul HATRY, and also the Mayor of Brussels, who has honoured us with his presence today, and thanks to whom we shall shortly be meeting in the magnificent and historical setting of the Town Hall.

There are also in this room today many representatives of European or national socio-professional organizations, whom I am pleased to welcome. For us, they are a sign of the Committee's vitality and of the interest and trust of those who work, invent things or defend consumers. In the quarter of a century since the European Economic Community came into being, they have all felt the need to organize themselves, not only in their respective countries but also at European level. They have done this spontaneously, on their own initiative; in other words, they believed — and they still believe — in Europe. Not only do they believe, but they translate their beliefs into actions every day.

To each and every one of them, I say: the Economic and Social Committee is also your committee. When the authors of the Treaty of Rome set up the Economic and Social Committee, they did not want the European Community to be merely a creation of governments and administrations; they wanted it to belong to those engaged in economic activity too.

Experience has shown that their idea was a good one. The habits of working together, examining difficulties together and comparing points of view, which have

grown up within our institution over the past 25 years, have become irreversible. They have helped create a Europe of realities, going far beyond a Europe simply made up of institutions. It is partly for this reason that the Community has shown an astonishing capacity to resist the centrifugal forces which have been acting on it since the onset of the recession and the rise in unemployment. Time and again it has confounded forecasts of its decline, or even demise.

And this prompts me to pay tribute to all former members of the Committee, to all the former chairmen and secretaries-general who are here with us today. We are particularly pleased to have them among us. We are well aware of the importance of the work which they have carried out so devotedly and selflessly, and we are resolved to continue what they have begun.

Of course, we do run into difficulties. It is sometimes difficult for an advisory body to integrate itself effectively into the decision-making machinery of the Community, which is complex and subject to great pressures and constraints that are, at times, contradictory.

But we are resolved to play our part to the full because we believe that the professional interests and organizations which we represent have a decisive contribution to make to the building of Europe.

Alongside the European Parliament, which is the indispensable representative of democratic legitimacy, the Economic and Social Committee is a specific balancing factor in the pluralist system which we have.

It is the only forum in the Community where it is possible to reach a consensus on the issues facing Europe that transcends national, corporate, occupational and social interests. Sometimes these issues are highly technical; but they are also very concrete. Sometimes they are also very general, touching upon the grand economic and social issues facing us. We are not always able to arrive at a

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unanimous view. But the views which are expressed within the Committee are always done so objectively.

It is doubtless for that reason that, more often than not, we can reach an agreement supported by a wide spectrum of representatives of producers, workers and others. In my view, the Committee's opinion is therefore worth considering as really important by those who have the heavy responsibility of taking decisions.

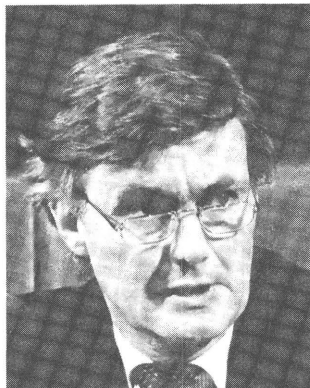
At a time when profound and rapid changes in behaviour and habits are called for, the Committee can also serve as a test-bed for new ideas or proposals. This has already been the case on several occasions. I should like to mention here the conferences on genetic engineering, the enlargement of the Community, the role of the construction industry and the forthcoming conference on youth employment.

It is precisely because it is not obliged to come to a decision that the Committee can span a wide variety of attitudes and, at the same time, exhibit a strong feeling of interdependence and a refusal of doctrinal, extremist, utopian or unrealistic remedies.

In this way it can help pave the way for necessary changes and developments.

Without underestimating the intensity of the pressures exerted on our industrial society, or the bitterness of the economic battle which we have to wage in the world, we are convinced that there exists in our Europe abundant resources of renewal and vitality. To bring them out, we must beat down the barriers which separate our countries and their traditions, our social classes and their interests, and continually strengthen communication and the search for essential convergencies.

The Economic and Social Committee is resolved to play its part fully here. For indeed, is not 25 the age when one has great ambitions?



***Speech by Mr P. DANKERT,
President of the European
Parliament***

Your Royal Highness, Mr Chairman, your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a privilege to address you on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Economic and Social Committee.

As President of the European Parliament, I should like to congratulate you on the way that you in the Economic and Social Committee have done much to enable the cooperation between the two sides of industry. I would first congratulate you on the work you have put into making your national organizations think in a European way.

The Economic and Social Committee and the European Parliament are, by their very nature, complementary. Both advise the Council and the Commission. Our practical role in the Community decision-making process is rooted in our responsibility towards our respective constituencies.

Although the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee are independent of

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each other, their Opinions, when they are the same, support and strengthen each other.

Clearly, independence does not rule out cooperation. For a number of years now contacts between us have been on the increase precisely because we realized that we are natural allies, capable, as representative bodies, of joining forces to exert more pressure than we could alone. Frequent contacts take place between the Committee Chairman and the President of the Parliament, and between Parliamentary Committees and the ESC's departments. Of particular importance are the consultations and joint meetings on transport policy and the internal market, and in the context of the ACP-EEC Joint Committee.

What is more, some prominent members of the present European Parliament who are here today served as Chairmen or members of the Economic and Social Committee. The fact that the European Parliament and the ESC are not only closely linked on a personal level but also complement and support each other in their work led to the adoption by the Parliament, in July 1981, of a Resolution calling for increased contacts and consultations, with due consideration, of course, for the limitations imposed by our respective responsibilities.

It is very encouraging to note that we reach similar conclusions by independent but complementary procedures. This is a frequent occurrence, and enables us to exert our influence in an attempt to stimulate the Community's decision-making process.

I am particularly glad that, on this auspicious day, I can address the trade organizations represented in the Economic and Social Committee, in view of the coming elections for the European Parliament. To my mind, it would be very serious if we could not together convince the people of Europe of the importance of these elections, you through the organized interest groups which you represent, and

we more directly to the voters. We must convince them. Although there are fortunately few within the European Community who are still opposed to it, there remains a great deal of indifference and the political and economic significance of the Community for the public is seriously underestimated. The peace which Europe has enjoyed over the last 25 years, and the unprecedented prosperity which the Community has helped to bring about, are too readily taken for granted; people fail to realise that the political struggle must go on if we are not to lose what we have gained and that to stand still is to retreat. The Member States and their citizens have derived enormous benefit from the setting-up of the Community. Ironically, the existence of the EEC has strengthened rather than weakened the individual national States. Isn't the weakening of the national States, which we are now seeing, and the decline in the parliamentary systems on which our way of life is based, related — closely related even — to the inability of the Member States to develop policies at European level?

Our greatest concern, Mr Chairman, is the economic crisis afflicting the Community and other countries alike. This is the greatest challenge we have had to face since the Community was formed.

We know that the crisis is structural and long-lasting. We know, too, that it cannot be fought at national level alone. Can we prove to those we represent that without the Community we should have suffered much more from the effects of the crisis? Can we offer the electorate a vision of the future and make them understand that we cannot leave the struggle against the crisis to the Member States alone and that the Community offers another way, involving participation and democratic control?

It is in the interests of both sides of industry to uphold and develop democracy within the Community. What does the European Parliament mean to the socio-economic groups? What is the

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importance of a directly elected European Parliament for the people you represent?

The European Parliament is the best-known of the European institutions. I must admit, I was surprised, but research has proved it. It encapsulates Europe in the eyes of the voters, although this does not say a great deal. It is for precisely this reason, however, that we now have the opportunity, as a result of the boost the 1979 direct elections gave to our legitimacy, to harness public opinion and generate political pressure for the promotion of the European ideal.

I think the Committee and the Parliament share a common interest in this goal and that we could step up our joint efforts to overcome the inertia in Europe and especially in the Council of Ministers. I hope we shall be able to count the Commission among our allies in this task.

What is to be done? With Stuttgart only a few days away, it is impossible not to discuss the most pressing problems facing the Community, problems shared by the two sides of industry. I am thinking here of the question of the Community's finances. Your function, our function, both will be under threat if an agreement in principle is not reached by the European Council in Stuttgart on increasing the Community's own resources. The scope for developing new policies — I am thinking here of industrial policy — depend on it, but that is not all. The continuation of a common agricultural policy — leading, I hope, to fewer structural surpluses — and the incorporation of the problem of Britain's budget contributions in Community policy, at least in the long or medium term, will also depend on what is decided in Stuttgart.

I hope that you — through your organizations — will help to bring about an agreement, so that the present stagnation can be overcome, and the accession of Spain and Portugal, something we have both supported, can soon become reality.

There is another area in which we shall have to apply pressure to Ministers and the European Council: the economy and employment. You are familiar with the figures. There are now 12 million registered unemployed in the Community. This means that far more Europeans are directly confronted in their family life by the destabilizing effects of unemployment. This is quite unacceptable. The European Parliament has taken the initiative in asking a number of eminent economists to investigate the possibilities of a European economic recovery. We hope that this project will constitute a positive step towards the early implementation of a crisis plan. The potential of the Community's internal market has not yet been exploited to the full. One of the lessons of the 1930's is that a very extensive internal market offers the possibility of a more rapid and more effective economic recovery. The European Parliament has joined with the Economic and Social Committee in calling for the removal of all internal barriers to trade. The costs arising from these barriers are equal to total Community spending on agriculture.

Mr Chairman,

At its Plenary Sessions in April and May, the European Parliament stressed that, in these exceptional times, exceptional measures were required to combat youth unemployment. The Parliament made proposals on part-time working, temporary work, early retirement, and the setting-up of offices for unemployed youngsters. We also said that 10% of the Community budget should be allotted to the Social Fund to create more jobs, particularly in the private sector, and in this way combat the most acute forms of youth unemployment.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have confined myself to just a few of the many topics which are of interest to us both. Yet we have a common problem — how to convince those we represent that the problems we

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face are pressing and that political action is necessary at Community level? Your scope for action in this area is at least as great as ours, I think. You deal with organizations whose action is governed not by national considerations but by the nature of the problems. I know that for employers, and still more for workers, the barriers to European action are considerable — nevertheless, they are incomparably less than those faced by politicians, who owe their power to national political parties and national elections.

The 1984 European elections are, as you say, very important — they are the first truly direct elections to the European Parliament. I hope that in the elections of June 1984 you will give your support to the true Europeans of the European Parliament, as that is the only way to resist the growing nationalism within the Community.

I am assuming that I can ask this of you on your 25th Anniversary because I am certain that all those who have worked here in the ESC for 25 years are well aware that the future of our social system and of the Member States is more than ever determined by the freedom of action that the Member States are prepared to allow the Community to secure their future.

I hope that you will be celebrating your 26th Anniversary not in Brussels but out campaigning.



*HRH the PRINCE of LIÈGE greets
Mr P. DANKERT.
On the right: Mr I. RICHARD*

*HRH the PRINCE of LIÈGE. On
his right: Mr MARGOT, ESC Vice-
Chairman. On the left:
Mr MAJOR, former ESC
Chairman, and Mr HATRY,
Minister for Brussels Affairs.*



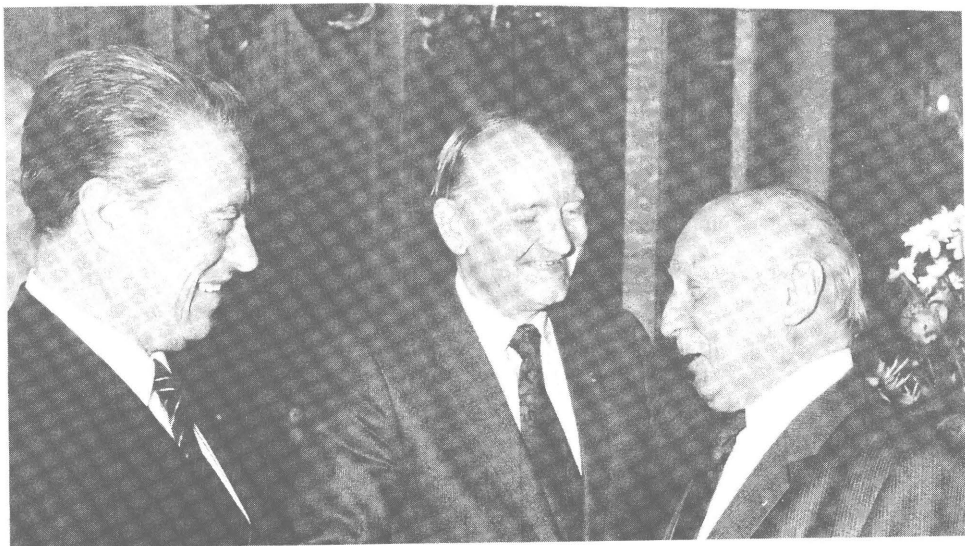
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The Albert room

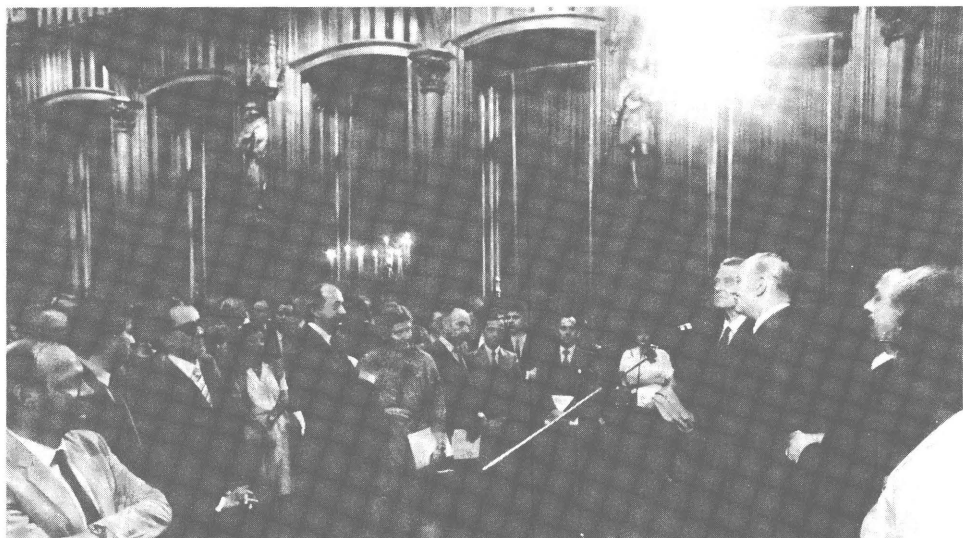
The European Communities' Choir





*Speech by the Mayor of Brussels,
Mr BROUHON, at Brussels Town
Hall. On his right: Mr CEYRAC*

*Mr BROUHON, Mayor of
Brussels, greets Mr MAJOR.
On the left: Mr CEYRAC*



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***Speech by Mr Rudolf SPRUNG,
President-in-office of the Council***

Your Royal Highness, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today's event gives the Council an opportunity to express its thanks to your Committee. These thanks are addressed especially to you, Mr Chairman, and to your predecessors. You have made a distinguished contribution to the work of the Economic and Social Committee. I would also like to thank those who, by taking on special duties, have accepted an extra workload. They have taken on these duties in addition to the work they do in their own countries.

Over the last 25 years, the Economic and Social Committee has proved an important link between the peoples of Europe and between the Community institutions. Not only has the Committee facilitated contact between the representatives of the different groups in the Member States; it has also given these groups the opportunity of contact with the Council and the Commission. In bringing with them the experience and knowledge gained from their work in the economic and social life of their countries, these

people have helped create a “European” outlook. We owe them all our special thanks. I will not conceal the fact that there have been and still are some problems between our institutions. You sometimes complain, for example, that your Opinions do not receive sufficient consideration. You complain that they have little, if any, influence. I do not see it like this. Of course cooperation between the Economic and Social Committee and the Council is not perfect, but the same is true between the Committee and other Community institutions. These are above all problems of form. This does not mean we should question the usefulness of cooperation between us. We should work together to find a way to cooperate more effectively in future. Perhaps we can achieve this if the Council consults the Committee more thoroughly; through better coordination of our work programmes; or, finally, through shorter Committee Opinions, thus speeding up the decision-making process. I personally am sure that the willingness of all the parties to reach an agreement will result in a satisfactory solution for us all. Let me give you one piece of advice. Do not wait for the Council to act; make proposals yourselves. As the Council representative, I would like to encourage you to make full use of your independent position in the institutional structure of the European Communities. A very difficult period lies ahead, a period of challenge. For example, we are faced with soaring unemployment. We are particularly worried about youth unemployment. I am pleased to see that the Economic and Social Committee has tackled this problem directly. We await your Opinion with great interest. It is the Member States above all who must fight unemployment. None of them can solve the problem alone. The integration achieved so far obliges us to cooperate with each other. We all agree that these problems will only be solved by an increase in economic growth. And this growth must not only be higher, it must be sustained. An increase in our GDP is needed. This is one of the main tasks facing us in the years to come, and we must concentrate all our efforts on it.

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Of course, growth is not everything, but without it there is no doubt that we will not solve the problem of unemployment.

The first signs of an up-turn in the economic situation are now visible. Important basic conditions have improved world-wide, but our troubles are not yet over. It is the State first and foremost which must be ready to act, but each individual, every household, every company, must accept their responsibilities and take action. In particular, the independent groupings — and by that I mean the two sides of industry — must show that they fully appreciate the situation. What we in Germany call “social consensus” is a sine qua non for a real revival. Economic revival, structural changes and sustained economic growth all require an increase in private investment. This is the only way that jobs will be created in the future. A growth-oriented economic policy must thus concentrate first and foremost on the current lack of investment. The Council of Ministers and the OECD have both stressed this. The current enormous budget deficits mean that this can no longer be achieved by the old economic policy based on demand, but only by the creation of favourable general conditions. I believe that this view is gaining increasing ground in the Member States. A policy of this type includes the creation of an internal Community market through the removal of existing and potential barriers to free movement of goods and services. Despite the considerable progress we have made over the last few months, much remains to be done, and we must use all the opportunities of liberalization we have, and to the benefit of all. The creation of an internal market must be supplemented by an open trade policy. We must avoid the temptations of protectionism. This would be a short-term policy. We would not only be striking a blow to our trade partners, but to ourselves as well. For in the long term protectionism does not create jobs, it destroys them. This is why we will fight any trend towards interventionism in international trade. We must fight this trend towards protectionism, and avoid a race

towards subsidies, which would impede any attempt at restructuring and job creation. In the long term subsidies are not a good employment policy tool; furthermore, our budgets no longer permit them. It is the tax payer, the worker and the consumer who will have to foot the bill. I know that some Member States see this differently, and that it will be difficult to reach a consensus. But we can no longer act alone, and the Economic and Social Committee will have an important role to play, both as a mediator and a consultant.

In the Community, a reduction in working hours is receiving increasing prominence. I believe that we must look into this more carefully. Any measure likely to reduce unemployment must be considered. The situation in the job market makes this a must. But we must not expect a cut in working hours to be a miracle cure. Measures to reduce working hours can certainly help solve the problem, but they can only play a minor role. And if this policy involves extra state expenditure, it may have an adverse effect on the job market. Management and labour must try to reach a joint agreement on what can and cannot be achieved, and the best way of going about it. Training, or improved training, is a good starting point in reducing unemployment. The June meeting of the Council of Ministers in Stuttgart should provide some new suggestions on this, and the European Social Fund will have an important part to play here. I am sure that the Council of Social Ministers on 2 June will decide to concentrate the Fund's resources on the fight against youth unemployment. This would be a strong Community response to a burning issue. The importance of today's celebration makes it worth recalling that when all is said and done European integration is only one of the goals of European unity. The "European Union" we strive for is much more than that. It involves a common stance in all the main areas of our external relations, and effective solidarity within the Community itself. We must beware of labouring under false illusions: there are

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still considerable differences in the economic and social development of the Member States. This is particularly true when we consider the coming enlargement of the Community. This will, at least at the beginning, accentuate our economic and social difficulties still further. In spite of everything, in spite of this difficult situation, we must try and make real progress. Solutions calling for sacrifices from all of us will be easier to make if we are more acutely aware of the Community angle. Much still has to be done to increase public information. The Economic and Social Committee, embracing as it does all the groups involved, has a major role to play in this. By working together we can bring Europe a step forward. Valuable work has been done on unification already, and provides us with a challenge for the future. We must accept this challenge, in the interests of us all.



***Speech by Mr Ivor RICHARD,
member of the Commission***

Your Royal Highness, Mr Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasant duty and honour to convey to you, on behalf of President THORN and my colleagues, the Commission's congratulations on the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Economic and Social Committee.

Over the past 25 years, the relations between your Committee and the Community institutions have grown increasingly closer. This is particularly true in the Commission's association with your Committee. I am pleased to acknowledge that there is now the closest cooperation between our two organizations. This cooperation is particularly valued by the Commission because the Economic and Social Committee, consisting as it does of representatives of employers and trade unions, together with other interest groups, is a rather special body. Because of its composition, the Committee brings together a body of experience and an authority which is of great value to the whole of the Community.

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The working methods which your Committee has developed over the years have proved particularly effective. The Opinions which the Committee produces are evidence of the detailed and vigorous procedures you follow in reaching conclusions. Having the capacity, because of your Committee's varied composition, to provide experts in each of your sections and working parties, your Opinions carry a particular weight and authority.

The importance of the Economic and Social Committee in Community affairs has steadily increased since its inauguration in 1958. This is particularly true during the past ten years. It was at the Paris Summit in October 1972 that the Heads of Government requested the Community institutions "to recognize the right of the Economic and Social Committee in future to advise on its own initiative on all questions affecting the Community". It is gratifying to acknowledge that during the past decade your Committee has used this right of initiative on many occasions and has produced Opinions on many of the major problems facing the Community.

Since 1980, your Committee has also organized conferences on major economic, scientific and social matters. At the beginning of this year, you were responsible for a conference on the "Year of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises". I understand that you are also proposing to hold a conference on Youth Employment in the latter part of this year.

It is, I think, significant, Mr Chairman, that your Committee has chosen the themes of youth employment and small and medium-sized enterprises for your conferences during the year 1983, for both of these matters relate to the central problem which faces the Community at the present time. The economic recession that Europe, along with the rest of the world, is suffering has produced a profound crisis in the field of employment. At present, there are over 12 million people unemployed in the 10 Member States of the Community, which is a percentage unemployment rate of over 11%.

This is an extremely serious situation. However, when one looks at the situation of the young unemployed, that is the workers under the age of 25, the situation is not only serious, it is tragic. Within the Community, the rate of unemployment amongst the under 25s is over 26% and in some Member States has reached as high as 33%. Not only are these figures rising rapidly, but also the number of young people who have been out of work for a year or more is accelerating. To many people in the Community, the spectacle of literally millions of young people leaving school and going directly on to the unemployment lists for protracted periods is alarming. It is also, of course, likely to become a very dangerous situation if large numbers of our young people conclude that there is little hope for them in our democratic community.

It was out of our sense of concern over this situation that the Commission, in its recent Communication on Youth Employment, urged the Governments of Member States to accept a target of creating over a period of five years two and a half million jobs specifically for workers under 25 years of age. If we achieve this aim, then it will simply mean that youth unemployment will be brought down to the same level of unemployment experienced by adults. It is not therefore an over-ambitious proposal. Yet your Committee, like the Commission, is aware that the area of job creation remains a controversial one. You also recognize that policy priorities between the need to combat inflation and the struggle to defeat unemployment is also a matter of dispute. Because I have direct responsibility for employment in the Commission, I am particularly grateful to your Committee, and particularly to the Section for Social Questions, for the understanding and the support which they have given me in my attempts to produce acceptable policies in the field of employment. It is gratifying, Mr Chairman, to be able to acknowledge the improved relations between your Committee and the other Community institutions. I know there is considerable satisfaction in the Commission about the greatly improved

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cooperation between the General Secretariat of the Commission and your Secretariat. This closer working relationship has enabled the Commission to give greater forewarning of Commission proposals that are of interest to your Committee and it has also led to greater precision in defining the issues on which the Opinions of your Committee are being sought. We are also aware of and welcome the recent discussions which your Committee has had with the Council on ways to improve the effectiveness of your actions and Opinions. We wish these endeavours well. The sense of purpose and authority which your Committee has brought to many of the major problems facing the Community has demonstrated a sense of purpose which can well be emulated by the Community institutions. It is, I think, the sense of commitment which the members of your Committee bring to these difficult tasks which, in the end, will ensure that the formidable problems that we face will eventually be overcome.

In conclusion, may I express the hope that the cooperation and friendly relations between our two bodies continue to develop in the future as they have in the past. I would like again, on behalf of my colleagues in the Commission, to express our very best wishes on your 25th anniversary.



***Speech by
Mr MERTENS de WILMARS,
President of the Court of Justice
of the European Communities***

Your Royal Highness, Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Court of Justice joins the other institutions and the many authorities and representatives of the economic and social interest groups here today in congratulating you, Mr Chairman and your colleagues on the 25th Anniversary of the Economic and Social Committee. We hope to see the Committee, as a democratic representative body, continuing to fulfil its dual role of initiator and watchdog in line with the authority conferred upon it by the EEC Treaty and the experience which it has acquired over the years.

The Committee is in fact the forum "par excellence" where experience and professional interests converge at an economic and social level for the purpose of hammering out a creative consensus. The Committee is more concerned with achieving

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creative consensus than in seeking occasional compromises. This is its constructive contribution to the process of European integration. The many Opinions which the Committee has issued in the past show that it has always filled its role with extreme competence and has thus justified the confidence which the other institutions place in it. The anniversary which you celebrate with pride today, Mr Chairman, is however shared with the entire European Community. In fact the Community is contemplating its first 25 years with the sobriety which is appropriate in this difficult period but without discouragement. And I hope that it is optimistically assessing the efforts which have been going on over the last generation to flesh out the European ideal.

I was present in the Hague in 1948 when Winston Churchill advocated European integration with his usual wonderful eloquence. Since then, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark and more recently Greece have joined the founder Members of the EEC. There is no better proof of the permanent magnetism inherent in the idea of integration. The entire edifice has become bigger but also more vulnerable and if we are not eternally vigilant — and who could say that we have been — if we are not always on the alert, we may succumb to the insidious disease of inertia. Certainly no-one wishes to see this happen but after 25 years we should all perhaps revitalise our capacity for deciding what we want. The magnetism of the Community does not lie in piecemeal objectives but in the perspectives opened up by its initial objectives and in the future mapped out for it.

Mr Chairman, I have always believed that a supporter of European integration must prefer to be a disappointed optimist rather than a successful pessimist. I have felt that a venture on this scale, so different from its predecessors, takes time and must allow history to take its course if we are not to astound those who study the painful birth of our modern nations states; this is all the more true in the case of the European Community because it is

an unprecedented venture which, for the first time in the course of the interminable “history-conflict” which is deeply rooted in us, has been consciously sought by exclusively peaceful means.

May I, as President of the Institution which has the task of ensuring that the law is respected in the interpretation and implementation of the Treaties, stress that the law — that instrument par excellence of “peaceful change” is eminently suited to contribute to the implementation of this great venture. May I also stress that respect for the law is calculated to promote and implement its achievement. Respect for the law makes it easier to solve problems, disrespect merely complicates matters. The Treaties have stood the test of time remarkably well and after a quarter of a century they maintain their original capacity and dynamism. It is the temptation to ignore the rules rather than to apply them which causes problems.

In these difficult times, the Court of Justice is striving with might and main to preserve the progress made by the Community. It is particularly concerned that nothing should be done to undermine those major economic and social freedoms which are the cornerstone of the Common Market: free movement of labour, goods, services, and freedom of establishment. In the light of our experience in the past 25 years, we must however point out that although negative integration, i.e. the elimination of barriers to trade — is worthwhile and must be defended and vigorously pursued, it must in the long term be backed by positive integration.

The common policies — coal, steel, agriculture, transport, peaceful use of nuclear energy, external trade, cyclical policy, competition policy, harmonization of legislation — are the instruments provided by the Treaty for achieving such positive integration. They are within our grasp and considerable progress can be achieved by using them systematically. Let us hope that this will be the case. Exploring such avenues is consistent with the

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noble task of the Economic and Social Committee. Nevertheless, it has become clear that we must go further. For several years past the European Council has seen this clearly and has singled out those areas where additional action to consolidate the common market must be taken: monetary relations and modern industrial technology.

If the Community wishes to be more than a rather sophisticated customs union — and its destiny is to be much more than this — it must strive to remain or to become an area where prosperity is shared out fairly.

This is the limit of the power of the law, even a law as consciously evolutive as that aspired to by the founding fathers of the Community. The responsibility of the judges ends there and the responsibility of Community citizens, the political authorities and the representative bodies of economic and social activity begins. By pooling their efforts Community citizens and institutions must provide the impetus which will propel a united Europe into the 21st century. The Economic and Social Committee is one of those forums where this type of responsibility is exercised.

You will all have heard of the Gruthuyse Palace in Bruges, one of the oldest, most beautiful cities in this country. On the front of the Palace is engraved the slogan of the great feudal leaders who used to live there “You can do better”. Mr Chairman I can think of no more suitable way of concluding than of hoping that the Economic and Social Committee will, via its Opinions, continue to say to the European institutions “You can do better”.



***Speech by Mr Manlio GERMOZZI,
senior member of the Economic
and Social Committee***

Mr Chairman, Presidents of the Community
Institutions, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have been a member of the Economic and Social Committee since 1958. It is due to this fact alone that the Chairman has honoured me with an invitation to speak, for which I am most grateful to him.

Today the ESC celebrates its 25th anniversary. These 25 years have not always run smoothly. We have had our difficulties. The Community itself has already celebrated the same anniversary with dignity. It is not decrepit, even though during its existence it has had to face periods of crisis, capriciousness and stagnation. It is larger today than it was at its birth — which I remember not with nostalgia but with pride, with the Community spirit which has infused my work for the Committee with all those colleagues who I remember in my heart but will not name, in case someone is left out.

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Let me glance back over the years, at this irreversible movement forward. The six signatories of the Treaty of Rome were joined by three countries with great traditions: the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark, with its snow and icy sea, Hamlet and its mermaid. Last came Greece, with its sun and its Parthenon, an ancient civilization and a young republic — Homer and Minerva.

The importance of the Community does not lie only in the economic and social sphere, and in trade, although at the Economic and Social Committee we have devoted much effort to formulating carefully considered proposals on these aspects, drawing on our experience. The Community means, first and foremost, the unity of its peoples. Although distances do not seem so great nowadays, these peoples have a long history and often different traditions and customs.

25 years ago, at the inaugural meeting of our Committee, I wondered whether we would be able to fully appreciate that we were not only subjects, but also builders of this Community. I wondered what “being European” and “thinking European” really meant. For we had to take a responsible part in this process.

The ESC has answered these questions. I myself can bear witness to this.

Today's celebration gives us an opportunity to reflect on a historic and economic fact: a Community which for 25 years has been a reference point for different civilizations, cultures and traditions, united by one ideal. In economic and social terms, this reflects the painful road of national development, experienced by all countries and all peoples.

This is the guiding thread which for 25 years has united us in a sometimes difficult but always confident endeavour to contribute by our Opinions to the development of an open, democratic, free society. This is what calls us all to work for a better tomorrow.

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